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Chair: Mr. Donckel (Vice-Chair) ..... (Luxembourg)

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In the absence of Mr. Momen (Bangladesh), Mr. Donckel (Luxembourg), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 19: Sustainable development (A/66/87, A/66/297, A/66/298, A/66/298/Corr.1, A/66/337, A/66/388 and A/66/391)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/66/287, A/66/304 and A/C.2/66/2)

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(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind (A/66/291)

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/66/291)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (A/66/291)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its twenty-sixth session

(h) Harmony with Nature (A/66/25, Supp. No. 25)

(i) Sustainable mountain development (A/66/302)

(j) Promotion of new and renewable sources of energy (A/66/306)

1. **Mr. Djoghlaf** (Executive Secretary, Convention on Biological Diversity), introducing under sub-item (f), his report on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity contained in chapter III of document A/66/291, expressed the hope that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets would be part of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

2. **Ms. Salih** (Sudan) said that the success of the Rio+20 Conference would depend on an earnest long-term political commitment, including provisions for funding, technology transfer and capacity-building to combat poverty. Measures to green the economy should comply with the Rio Principles, combining a commitment to prosperity with respect for national sovereignty. The seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (the Durban Conference) would need to confront a number of challenges, not least the future of the Kyoto Protocol.

3. In view of its vast and fertile agricultural sector, the Sudan had the potential to be an international exporter of food commodities. Her Government had been pursuing an agricultural development programme for several years. However, as a least developed country (LDC) and a country emerging from conflict, it needed international support in order to attract investment for the sustainable management of farmland, forests and other natural resources. The international community could assist it by fulfilling official development assistance (ODA) commitments, facilitating market access, and improving access to technologies on preferential terms and without conditionalities.

4. **Mr. Kalpokas** (Vanuatu) said that, like all small island developing States, Vanuatu faced critical challenges in its efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for that reason, remained concerned about the slow rate of implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, which was currently the only global strategy for addressing their particular vulnerabilities. Improvements in data collection and analysis, as well as better financial and technical support, were needed with a view to enhancing the accountability and transparency of existing sustainable development programmes and achieving more tangible progress. His delegation looked to the United Nations to embrace that strategy more fully and provide a platform for it.

5. The interlinkage between sustainable development and climate change also needed to be adequately taken into account and should be reflected in the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, while priority attention should be given to the protection and sustainable management of fisheries and oceans. The protection of coral reefs in particular was of vital

economic and social concern to the 30 million people worldwide dependent on them for their livelihoods. He called on other delegations to join his own in supporting a strong resolution on the subject. Looking ahead to the Durban Conference, he urged all delegations to work towards the establishment of a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and the operationalization of the Cancun Agreements, including the proposed Green Climate Fund.

6. **Ms. Masot Planas** (Cuba) said that the universally agreed goals of environmental sustainability still remained out of reach in the current context of multiple crises. Developing countries were continuing to make huge efforts to achieve sustainable development while contending with increasingly difficult obstacles, notably the lack of necessary additional resources, their limited access to new technologies and the continuing stalemate of the Doha Round negotiations. Rich countries must, as a matter of urgency, show the necessary political will to bring about a lasting reversal in the situation; that depended essentially on the development of alternative sustainable economic models grounded in a new international economic order.

7. Just as the countries of the South were suffering from an economic and financial crisis triggered by the failure of the neo-liberal economic model, so also were they currently facing an environmental crisis that was not of their making. It was ever more necessary for developed countries to give evidence of wise leadership through ambitious commitments to the reduction of greenhouse emissions in order to slow down climate change and avert its disastrous effects. The Durban Conference offered an opportunity to arrive at a binding agreement to that effect. Cuba similarly looked to the Rio+20 Conference to reaffirm the Rio Principles, in particular principle 2 on the sovereign right of States to exploit their own resources and principle 7 on States' common but differentiated responsibilities for environmental degradation. Given that sustainable development offered the only means whereby the countries of the South could exercise their right to development, international cooperation through multilateral mechanisms was essential for them to attain that end. Environmental and economic sustainability would remain an empty slogan without transfers of environment-friendly technology, cancellation of the foreign debt of developing countries, the elimination of market inequalities and changes to unfair patterns of income distribution worldwide.

8. **Mr. Radian** (Israel) said that his country was spearheading innovative technology and ideas towards sustainable development, which had never been a greater imperative than at the current time when the world's natural resources were being recklessly depleted. Not only had Israel long been developing methods to conserve energy, but it was also committed to reducing its dependence on oil, the rising price of which was inseparable from the onset of poverty and rising food prices, particularly in developing countries. The use of renewable and notably solar energy was accordingly being promoted in the country, particularly through the Eilat-Eilot renewable energy initiative, while wise water management, including the recycling of wastewater, was seen as having a crucial role in combating desertification and ensuring sustainability. Integrated waste management was also practised, in view of the country's scant land resources.

9. Israel's commitment to sustainable development was further illustrated by an international meeting it had recently hosted on the use of green agriculture to stimulate economic growth and eradicate poverty. Its private sector had recognized the economic potential of green innovation and investment and had formed partnerships with the Government to achieve sustainable development goals. Israel was also committed to the attainment of those goals at the international level and in the long term, especially since those countries that contributed the least to climate change were its biggest victims. It accordingly looked forward to the Rio+20 Conference as an opportunity for the international community to work together to that end.

10. **Mr. Ngculu** (South Africa) joined other speakers in welcoming the opportunity offered by the Rio+20 Conference to make good on earlier intergovernmental commitments. Resource-rich countries must demonstrate renewed political will in order to help the destitute in the developing world and respond more effectively to global challenges that were undermining the capacity of countries to achieve sustainable development. Efforts towards a green economy should not be at the expense of the socio-economic advancement of the poor and should not serve as a pretext for trade protectionism. For there to be a level playing field for all, developing countries needed to be

assisted financially in meeting their sustainable development goals.

11. South Africa was also looking forward to the forthcoming Durban Conference which it was hosting, conscious of the various adverse effects of climate change. The Conference should produce an equitable, inclusive and credible outcome that would take into account the greater vulnerability of certain regions, due to poverty, underdevelopment and geographical situation. A global regime to address climate change should accordingly include higher global emission reduction targets and enhancement of the adaptive capacity of developing countries. Such an outcome needed to be informed by the following principles: preserving and strengthening the multilateral response to climate change, environmental integrity, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, equity and honouring of international commitments. His delegation counted on the support of all the parties in ensuring the operationalization of the key mechanisms and institutional arrangements agreed upon at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Cancun, Mexico, in 2010.

12. **Ms. Gregg** (Liechtenstein) said that the Rio+20 Conference was a generational opportunity to set a new course. For it to be successful, it should produce a political commitment at the highest level to the establishment of a green economy worldwide that would promote sustainable development and contribute to poverty eradication while ensuring democracy, good governance and respect for human rights. To that end, Liechtenstein favoured a forward-looking, action-oriented outcome guided by the internationally agreed development goals, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The outcome document should include a green economy road map setting out goals, concrete measures and mechanisms and timelines and provide the impetus to develop new and necessary indicators to complement traditional indices of economic growth. Sustainable development goals should not divert attention from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but reflect a renewed commitment to development through a new and universal focus on sustainability supported by a strengthened institutional architecture.

13. The Rio+20 Conference should result in reforms that would ensure the balanced integration of the three pillars of sustainable development and the enhanced implementation of related policies and programmes. Her delegation supported proposals to improve system-wide coordination to that end and to transform the Commission on Sustainable Development into a Council subsidiary to the General Assembly. Liechtenstein also supported proposals to upgrade the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to the status of specialized agency of the system so as to enable it to become the leading global voice for the environment.

14. **Ms. Al-Shaaban** (Kuwait) said that the international community must put in place an effective, democratic and transparent global partnership guaranteeing cooperation between the countries of the North and the South. States should comply with their commitment to provide ODA equivalent to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product; her own country's average ODA was well above that target.

15. Her country was a long-standing contributor to international development projects and had provided 104 countries with preferential loans and development assistance. The Amir of Kuwait had launched a range of development initiatives, including a programme for the reconstruction of eastern Sudan and a $2 billion project launched at the Arab Economic Summit to promote small and medium-sized enterprises, to which her Government had contributed $500 million. A national development plan had been adopted for the period 2010-2014 with a budget of over $100 billion in order to develop infrastructure, improve education and health care, reduce the country's reliance on the oil sector and promote it as a financial hub.

16. Kuwait was currently enacting national strategies to preserve biodiversity. Several Government agencies, as well as non-governmental and civil organizations, were involved in environmental conservation and research. Wildlife reserves for endangered animals had been opened, and projects were under way to study and protect herbivorous species and plants.

17. Kuwait called on the international community to take action to combat climate change through the use of alternative clean energy in all sectors, the listing of restrictions on low-level emission technologies and the adoption of natural and regional work plans.

18. **Mr. Srivali** (Thailand) said that recent challenges to development raised the question of how far development policies had been sustainable in the past. A new model was needed that would advance inclusive growth while promoting global sustainability in a

holistic and balanced manner. The Rio+20 Conference would provide an opportunity to put forward such a new paradigm for development and at the same time to propose a new and effective institutional framework, possibly through a sustainable development council that would ensure greater policy coherence throughout the system in the pursuit of a balanced and integrated approach.

19. His delegation supported green economy options that were consistent with an open, equitable, rules-based, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system and that ensured market access for developing countries and the narrowing of technology gaps. Such an approach fitted in with the sufficiency economy philosophy practised in Thailand. In a world of finite resources, the path to sustainability began with the practice of moderation.

20. **Mr. Al Seedi** (Iraq) said that desertification posed a grave danger to biodiversity. Mismanagement of agricultural land, forests and grasslands, combined with climate change, had exacerbated the problem. An array of coordinated measures would be needed in order to reverse the process and regenerate the environment. Scientific studies should be conducted, and policies should be developed in order to train staff and establish environmentally friendly land management systems.

21. In May 2010, Iraq had acceded to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which was an indispensable part of the international effort to tackle the issue. Failure to take action would jeopardize the survival of vulnerable communities.

22. **Ms. Hussain** (Maldives) recalled that small island developing States had been recognized as a special case for sustainable development 20 years earlier at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Rio+20 Conference should adequately address the unique challenges facing them in that respect, in particular by making good on past commitments. Maldives joined with other such States in calling for a third global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States. It likewise joined with them in calling for the formal recognition of a special category of such States within the United Nations system, with access to dedicated financing and concessionary conditions.

23. For Maldives, the green economy was a blue economy, dependent on fisheries and tourism. The overexploitation of fisheries was therefore a matter of great concern to her country as it endangered its sustainable development, which was also affected by ocean acidification and climate change. The protection of the ocean, of its coral and fish stocks, was a central issue for each of the three pillars of its sustainable development and should be addressed at the Rio+20 Conference. Moreover, sustainable development was closely intertwined with climate change which remained the greatest challenge to Maldives. A global movement towards sustainability could avert further impacts of climate change on small islands. Reduced carbon emissions would not only contribute to that movement; through job creation and the triggering of technological innovation, it could also form a basis for sustainable development, which was at the core of the survival of Maldives.

24. **Mr. Singh** (India) said that there had recently been a sudden shift of global attention away from sustainable development and environment to questions of finance and employment. However, it was becoming increasingly clear that, as a matter of urgency, priority should be assigned to environmental concerns, with special attention to the challenges facing small island developing States and to the consequences of desertification and land degradation. Climate change mitigation required new, more resistant and higher-yielding crops, while adaptation might call for dislocation of habitats and a re-engineering of economic activity. The question was whether the necessary large investments should be financed by a universal carbon tax and how much differentiation and concessionality it might accommodate. Access to technology was a further related concern: it should be guaranteed and affordable and subject to appropriate intellectual property rights regimes.

25. A holistic, integrated framework needed to be developed in order to embrace all those concerns, even if only through an incremental approach, given that a grand agreement might not be practical. His delegation looked to the Rio+20 Conference for such an outcome, convinced that the General Assembly must be encouraged to reposition sustainable development and environment as global priorities. India, for its part, along with other large developing countries, and notwithstanding its own small carbon footprint, was ready to assume more than its fair responsibility. His

Government had already outlined a credible action plan on climate change and global warming and made provision for appropriate action as part of its twelfth five-year plan. It looked forward to acting in close concert with the Group of 77 and other member countries to regenerate public awareness of the related issues.

26. **Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan) said that each country should frame its own strategy for putting in place a green economy; that approach was one of the most effective means of achieving sustainable development, which also required the promotion of investment for technological innovation; economic growth and job creation could result. The importance of a green economy should therefore be emphasized at the Rio+20 Conference, which should also make a useful contribution to discussions on the international development agenda beyond 2015. Human security, based on a people-centred, holistic approach, could be a key guiding principle.

27. With a view to the Rio+20 Conference, Japan had put forward a number of proposals in areas of which it had experience and knowledge, including disaster risk reduction, energy and food security, and was preparing specific related initiatives, in particular on a future sustainable city model and citizen development for a sustainable society. Japan considered that sustainable development required the promotion of integrated efforts at national, regional and international levels and a balance between economy, society and environment. In addition, the function of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be improved, notably through the introduction of a peer review mechanism. The strengthening of institutional frameworks for environmental issues was an urgent task, best achieved through a step-by-step approach, starting with the promotion of synergies between existing multilateral environmental agreements and leading eventually to the establishment of a specialized organization.

28. **Mr. Kalandarov** (Tajikistan) said that coordinated effo on the part of the international community were required to address the challenge of climate change, whose effects included the accelerated melting of glaciers. Tajikistan, as the source of 60 per cent of the water resources of Central Asia, was proposing to establish an international fund to save glaciers and invited other Member States to support it. The cooperation and support of the international community and donors were also required to address the crisis resulting from the degradation of the Aral sea, caused by irrational use of water resources and unsustainable agricultural practices. Water was essential for sustainable development and indeed for the preservation of life and called for a strengthening of international and regional water cooperation. Tajikistan had accordingly led the initiative to declare 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation. Within that framework, his Government intended to organize several regional and international activities. It expected the Rio+20 Conference to provide an opportunity to explore ways of strengthening cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders on related issues.

29. Energy resources were likewise of the utmost importance for sustainable development. For that reason, Tajikistan fully supported universal access to modern energy services, in particular through the development and use of renewable energy, which was an important means of combating climate change. He called, in conclusion, for encouragement and support for projects aimed at increasing the global share of renewable energy and enhancing energy supply and conservation.

30. **Mr. Chibaeff** (France) said that the system of international environmental governance was no longer equal to the task of confronting the multiple environmental challenges threatening the world. The international environmental pillar was fragile, fragmented and ineffective. If that situation continued unchecked, UNEP would grow weaker and its authority and capabilities would decline. The result would be catastrophic for the environment in particular and for the multilateral system in general since in the absence of a strong centre of gravity, worsening tensions over natural resources and raw materials would be settled through bilateral relations. UNEP must therefore be transformed into an organization with full legal personality in which all Member States were represented which would be a source of recognized authority with access to a stable resource stream. At the same time, a more globalized approach to sustainable development in all of its dimensions was needed.

31. The concept of a green economy, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, reflected the reality that growth, employment and environmental protection were three aspects of the same paradigm. The "road map" provided by the European Union (EU) incorporated indicators of social,

environmental and long-term progress into measures of national performance, thereby eliminating the seeming contradiction between growth and environmental protection. The United Nations could assist countries in drawing up strategies adapted to their specific needs.

32. France had taken specific measures in several key areas to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development. It was engaged in efforts to ensure universal access to water resources and sanitation and would be hosting the sixth World Water Forum in Marseille in March 2012. The Forum would focus on issues of water management, water as the engine of a green economy, and water as an essential element for poverty eradication. France had launched, with Kenya, the Paris-Nairobi Climate Initiative to promote clean energy projects based on low carbon development strategies for developing countries in Africa and countries at risk from climate change. About 15 countries had joined the Initiative so far and were working to structure the projects and establish conditions to attract investments. France also accorded priority to land degradation and desertification, and to protection of the marine environment. Two important aspects were protection of biodiversity in the marine areas situated beyond the jurisdiction of States; and protection of coral reefs throughout the world, an issue in which France had been actively involved for many years, in association with its overseas territories.

33. **Mr. Souissi** (Morocco) said that despite the remarkable progress that had been made by a number of developing countries since the holding of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, sustainable development had not become established as a global economic alternative. The repercussions of natural disasters and environmental degradation demonstrated how much the international community had yet to achieve in order to establish the conditions necessary for the realization of a new global environmental regime.

34. Morocco had made significant progress in promoting sustainable development through the establishment of a legal framework to address environmental issues. Faced with numerous challenges, it had adopted a series of new development strategies, focused on the priority objectives of economic growth, poverty eradication, rural advancement and protection of the environment. His Government had initiated a mega solar project aimed at diversifying national energy resources and enhancing the national power grid, which would be completed in 2019. It was working towards the goal of completely eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by cities in the country's south. It had recently drawn up a national charter for the environment and sustainable development which would preserve land and natural resources and ensure the sustainable growth of industry and tourism, on a basis of respect for biodiversity and promotion of social progress.

35. **Ms. Al-Hadid** (Jordan) said that the promotion of sustainable development continued to be challenged by the impact of climate change on developing countries; more effective measures needed to be taken to tackle the problems. The international response should include the strengthening of the Hyogo Framework for Action for disaster risk reduction and support for the implementation of strategies for preparedness, rapid response, recovery and development. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol should be the primary framework for negotiating a global response to climate change, which should address not only the consequences but also the roots of the problem. The Rio+20 Conference would be an important opportunity to advance concrete measures and establish international partnerships.

36. Jordan's biodiversity was an important global resource; her Government had taken a number of conservation measures, including the establishment of national protected areas, strict monitoring of wildlife and the application of strategic environmental assessments as a means to promote sustainable development. New biodiversity initiatives were helping to alleviate poverty in rural communities and promote popular support for nature conservation. Several projects to develop ecotourism and other small nature-based businesses had been implemented and served as engines of income generation. Nevertheless, as a country characterized by a semi-arid climate, which contributed very little to global emissions, Jordan continued to be impacted by climate change.

37. **Ms. Bubanja** (Serbia) said that the Rio+20 Conference would provide a historic opportunity to reach agreements on sustainable development policies that would reduce poverty and create new jobs, encourage clean energy and promote the sustainable use of resources. Her Government believed that UNEP should be upgraded into a specialized agency so that

environmental issues could be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

38. Serbia had already made considerable progress in devising national policies to promote sustainable development, production and consumption. It was committed to a green economy, which offered possibilities for investment in the environmental infrastructure and for the development of new skills and technologies. In order to achieve those goals, the support of European and international financial institutions must be assured, and new and innovative financing and cooperation mechanisms needed to be defined.

39. Noting that 2012 had been proclaimed the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, she said that although energy demand worldwide was on the rise, especially in the emerging economies, it might be erroneous to claim that energy was in short supply as there were still alternative sources of fossil fuels. It could be argued that there was an overabundance of energy sources and that, through the excessive use of fuels and creation of the greenhouse effect, humans were contributing to climate change. Her delegation believed that every country should reduce carbon emissions and work with United Nations partners to build national strategies for that purpose.

40. In that context General Assembly resolution 61/151 represented an important milestone in the creation of an alternate energy future. Greater investment must be made in renewable sources of energy. It was vital for countries to devise comprehensive strategies to increase the level of energy efficiency. In particular, such strategies should address the problems of public transportation by reducing the use of automobiles, encouraging job creation in local communities affected by long commutes and, where gasoline demand was inelastic, introducing fuel tax increases and using the proceeds to fund the development of renewable sources of energy and green businesses. It was very important for every strategy to include technology transfers from developed to developing countries.

41. **Mr. Seyoum** (Eritrea) said that as a country located in an arid and semi-arid region, Eritrea was highly concerned by the issues of desertification, land degradation and drought, and was particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including climate variability. His country had acceded to the major international environmental instruments, and at the regional level had joined 10 other countries of the Great Green Wall Initiative to halt the advance of the Sahara. At the national level, it was implementing appropriate policies, strategies and programmes to reduce poverty, improve food security and combat land degradation.

42. His Government believed that any action to reverse land degradation should be country-driven and have a strong element of community participation and ownership. Under that approach it had established extensive forest reserves and national parks, promoted the practice of hillside terracing and planted more than 90 million tree seedlings; it had also constructed over 300 dams in various parts of the country. It had taken measures to improve the knowledge base on desertification, land degradation and drought so as to facilitate informed decisions and timely and appropriate preparedness and mitigation measures, and had strengthened monitoring and early warning systems for drought and desertification. Since desertification, land degradation and drought were interlinked problems, closer cooperation was needed at the global, national and regional levels.

43. **Mr. Scepanovic** (Montenegro) said that his Government regarded sustainable development as one of its main priorities and was progressively harmonizing its legal framework with the European Union *acquis* as part of the accession process. An institutional framework had been established and a large number of strategic documents had been adopted concerning sectors relevant to sustainable development.

44. As part of the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference his Government had organized the 14th meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the South-East European Cooperation Process, at which the Budva Declaration had been adopted. It had signed an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme office in Montenegro on the provision of support to the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism in continuing the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference; as a result of that cooperation, a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting had been held in October 2011 to conduct a national assessment of the progress made.

45. Since gaining independence in 2006, Montenegro had harmonized its laws with EU policy and had

acceded to the Energy Community Treaty, which obliged it to follow EU policies with regard to energy, the environment and the concurrent energy market. It was according priority to the sustainable development of the energy sector through the use of renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency. Montenegro had significant natural resources, including hydroelectric power, biomass and solar energy, as well as potential for energy savings and conservation. It was working on creating incentives for the implementation of renewable energy projects. In early 2012, construction would begin on two wind power plants and a dozen small hydroelectric plants. In addition there would be a sustained focus on using biomass and solar energy, especially for heating and cooling purposes, as well as the use of cogeneration systems to address the problems of waste disposal and energy security through decentralized energy systems. Montenegro was also working on environmental protection standards and on prioritizing the use of natural resources depending on needs.

46. **Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon** (Republic of Korea) said that despite the considerable progress made since the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 1992 the world had fallen far short of achieving its goals because of the lack of a fundamental change in the conventional development paradigm. His country considered a green economy to be at the heart of such a change.

47. In 2008 his country had adopted a Low Carbon, Green Growth strategy as a new vision for the next 60 years. It had established a presidential committee on green growth in 2009, enacted a framework act on low carbon, green growth in 2010 and had committed to investing 2 per cent of its gross domestic product in developing green technologies and related infrastructures. His delegation believed that effective institutions were critical in advancing green economy and sustainable development. In particular, institutional mechanisms to facilitate financial assistance and technology transfer to developing countries were crucial to the success of the Rio+20 process.

48. The Commission on Sustainable Development had done an effective job of integrating the three pillars of sustainable development rather than focusing primarily on environmental policy, but its capacity had remained too limited. In the short term the Commission should be strengthened in order to enable greater integration and collaboration of other international institutions, while in the long term the idea of creating a sustainable development council merited further consideration.

49. Climate change represented a serious obstacle to achieving sustainable development by reducing available food and water, increasing migration and altering coastal boundaries. Failure to combat climate change would ultimately degrade human economic development on a vast scale, causing a steep increase in the level of poverty and social hardship. In that regard, the Durban Conference was of vital importance; a clear plan was needed regarding implementation of the Cancun Agreements and the extension of the Kyoto Protocol.

50. Korea has hosted the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to "Combat" Desertification in Changwon just 10 days earlier. The Changwon Initiative aimed to further the implementation of the Convention and its 10-year strategy had been adopted at the Conference with the aim of enhancing the efforts for countries in need through active programmes to address desertification.

51. The international community should ensure that the benefits of modern and clean energy were available to all as a matter of equity and also as an issue of urgent practicality. Improving access to modern energy services would give the poorest people an opportunity to escape from extreme poverty, while switching to renewable energy would help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to mitigate the risks of climate change. Korea welcomed the Initiative of Sustainable Energy for All.

52. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that his delegation hoped that the Rio+20 Conference would launch a new era for sustainable development by identifying the obstacles to its attainment and by adopting measures to implement all past and future commitments. In the face of persistent crises and challenges, in particular the economic and financial crisis, poverty and food security, and climate change, the Conference would be an important opportunity to reaffirm and renew the political commitment, at the highest level, to implement the decisions taken. The final document should therefore be based on the principles adopted at the 1992 Conference, in particular the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and should bolster the three pillars of sustainable development in

the context of a comprehensive, integrated, balanced and synergistic manner.

53. The concept of a green economy should be approached in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development and should under no circumstances be used as a tool to impose additional constraints on the allocation of ODA or strengthen protectionist measures against the exports of developing countries; nor should it constitute an obstacle to the achievement of the MDGs. Access to green technologies and increased financial assistance to developing countries were the necessary preconditions for sustainable development and poverty eradication. In that regard, satisfactory answers must be provided regarding the impact of patents in building a green economy. The Rio+20 Conference should promote coherence and coordination and should strengthen the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development, promote multilateralism and further strengthen the role of the United Nations in economic and financial governance.

54. The successful outcome of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as well as the high-level meeting on desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication held during the current session of the General Assembly had established the Convention as a top priority for the international community and should help mobilize appropriate financial and technical assistance for countries confronting desertification, land degradation and drought. The outcome of the two meetings should inform the final document at the Rio+20 Conference. It was alarming that Africa was currently experiencing a severe drought and a grave food crisis. Algeria called for vigorous measures to combat desertification and make the issue a pressing priority in order to prevent further famines and humanitarian disasters.

55. Developing countries, which were the most affected by climate change and the most threatened by the current impasse, were concerned about the slow pace of negotiations; there was a need to ensure the effective implementation of the commitments made at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences held in Copenhagen and Cancun in terms of financing adaptation programmes and transfer of technologies, while bearing in mind the imperative need to establish a new commitment cycle beyond 2012 in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

56. His delegation welcomed the success of the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and undertook to work with all partners to ensure the implementation of the 10-year strategy to protect biodiversity, the international protocol and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

57. **Mr. Dingha** (Congo) said that it was clear that no single country could meet the challenges of sustainable development on its own. In that regard Agenda 21 reflected a global consensus and a political commitment at the highest level to cooperate on issues related to development and the environment. Yet progress in meeting its goals was decidedly mixed. The increasing pollution of the oceans and the depletion of fish stocks, the unsustainable use of forests and arable land, the inexorable advance of desertification, global warming, climate change and the growing frequency of natural disasters threatened entire populations and undermined political stability. His delegation welcomed the proposals by the Secretary-General in document A/66/304, particularly in respect of support for research, the transfer and adaptation of agricultural technology and the establishment of innovative financing. The Rio+20 Conference should promote a green economy, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

58. His country had integrated the issue of sustainable development at the heart of its national development priorities and had associated itself with all initiatives at the global, regional and subregional levels. With other countries of the Congo forest basin, it was engaged in sustainable forestry management, conservation and certification and prevention of illegal tree harvesting. As a result, there were very low levels of deforestation, representing a contribution by Central Africa to the global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He called on the international community to assist those efforts by providing financing under programmes that integrated compensation mechanisms. His Government was fulfilling its commitments in the sustainable management of biological diversity, and called on development partners to provide greater support under the commitments they had made with a view to achieving the objectives agreed upon.

59. **Ms. Agada** (Niger) said that her country was landlocked and severely affected by drought and desertification, exposing its population to persistent food insecurity, while the silting up of the Niger river had aggravated that situation. Her Government therefore accorded particular importance to the achievement of the objectives of Agenda 21 and was making every effort to eliminate archaic agricultural practices and develop modern irrigation methods. In April 2011 her Government had launched a wide-ranging agricultural research programme and intended to allocate nearly $900 million over the next five years with the goal of increasing grain production from 3 million to 5 million tons, reducing malnutrition and developing capacities to prevent and manage food crises. The construction of a dam on the Niger river would also contribute to increased agricultural production. Her Government also planned to improve road networks and promote hydroelectric and solar energy, and it was according priority to the building of railway infrastructure in cooperation with neighbouring countries.

60. Her Government had set the goal of achieving universal school enrolment by 2015. To that end, it would provide free and compulsory education for all up to age 16, promote educational opportunities for girls, and increase the percentage of students studying for advanced degrees from 8 per cent to 25 per cent. In the area of health, her Government would strive to reduce the infant mortality rate from 198 per 1,000 to 114 per 1,000 by 2015. To that end, it would build new health infrastructure, recruit doctors and set up a social security fund for the needy.

61. Niger had struggled against desertification and land degradation for decades, and it had adopted a national environmental policy in the 1980s to establish that goal as a national priority and ensure the effective participation of the population. Following its ratification of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, Niger had established a national council on sustainable development. A national environment plan had been adopted in the context of the revised poverty reduction strategy and, under that plan, Niger was engaged in land reclamation efforts involving tree planting and dune fixing which provided employment to thousands of rural young people.

62. All those development strategies would require financing; Niger called on all of its development partners to fulfil their commitments, notably those made under the Istanbul Programme of Action.

63. **Ms. Baidal Sequeira** (Costa Rica) said that her country was particularly vulnerable to natural disasters, most of them caused by the environmental imbalance affecting the world as a whole. Natural disasters had claimed numerous victims and caused damage worth millions of dollars in 2010, and the rainfall in October 2011 had been well above average. The region could not continue to cope with such challenges: the resources which it allocated to disaster relief were needed for socio-economic development and, specifically, the achievement of the MDGs. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean had noted that Central America was the most vulnerable region of the continent and that redoubled efforts were needed to reduce poverty, inequality, and social and environmental vulnerability.

64. Costa Rica remained firmly committed to innovative national policies to tackle the issue, but needed the support of the international community. Her country called on all Member States to fulfil their commitments to combat climate change; the time for excuses had passed. Increased investment was needed in disaster risk reduction at all levels. The world needed a coherent multilateral strategy to prevent and respond to natural disasters. The proposed mitigation measures were well known; the question was whether world leaders, especially in developed countries, would be able to take action and avoid a cataclysm.

65. **Ms. Fafowora** (Nigeria) said that as a result of globalization, the world had become so interconnected that no single country or region was immune from events in the rest of the world. International cooperation was therefore essential and must be strengthened. In order to secure sustainable energy for all, meet the rapid growth in energy demand, particularly in developing countries, and reduce the negative impacts of climate change, a total transformation of the global energy system was needed. New and renewable sources of energy were crucial to the achievement of a green economy, poverty eradication and sustainable development. While some countries were investing in renewable energy technologies, much more cooperation and action was needed to increase the contribution of those technologies to the global energy system.

66. Access to water was an urgent imperative. The imbalance between the development of water infrastructure, population growth and rapid urbanization had dire consequences for sanitation, food security, health, employment and standards of living. Her Government had embarked on a systematic reform of its national water sector with a view to achieving the MDGs, Vision 2020 and the Africa Water Vision for 2015.

67. Her Government called on Member States to demonstrate the requisite political will and cooperation towards the realization of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. It likewise called on developed countries to scale up their existing bilateral and multilateral ODA commitments and meet all the targets which had been set at the international level. An enhanced, predictable and sustainable flow of ODA was essential to meeting existing and future development challenges, including those faced by the inherently vulnerable least developed and small island developing countries.

68. **Ms. Stiglic** (Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the Green Group, namely Cape Verde, Costa Rica, Iceland, Singapore, Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates, said that in 2009 the foreign ministers of those countries had decided to act together in support of ambitious action to address climate change and promote sustainable development, renewable energy and sustainable water management. In order to respond to those challenges, it was crucial to take into account their interconnectedness. Sustainable development was an important component of any solution, but all three pillars, economic, environmental and social, needed to be addressed together.

69. Climate change had an impact on economic development, but it also had a direct effect on the natural water cycle and the availability of water resources, which imperilled certain regions of the world. Unless water challenges were addressed independently, and also in close connection with other global challenges, it would be impossible to secure decent living conditions for the world population.

70. Energy availability and accessibility was another pressing challenge, because fossil fuels were limited and, when used excessively, were damaging to the environment. Reliable energy networks needed to be expanded in order to ensure access to energy for all and contribute to development, preservation of the environment, social inclusion and poverty eradication. The Green Group believed that when building such networks, it was essential to include renewable sources of energy, as well as ensuring the efficient use of energy. The issue of the environment concerned all segments of society, from politics and the civil sector to the economy and academia. Combining the knowledge and engagements of all players nationally and internationally could lead to success in confronting global challenges.

71. **Mr. Emvula** (Namibia) said that climate change was one of the most serious challenges facing the world, threatening not only development prospects but also the very existence of many societies. His delegation called on the international community, particularly developed countries, given their historical responsibility, to adhere to the principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, particularly on the basis of equity in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. His delegation reiterated the importance of having a second commitment period for the Kyoto Protocol. It called for enhanced and urgent action to provide financial resources and investment to support action on mitigation, adaptation and technology transfer to developing countries.

72. It was unfortunate that the issues of desertification, land degradation and drought had little visibility on the global agenda. Namibia had welcomed the convening of the high-level meeting at the current session of the General Assembly on desertification, land degradation and drought. The meeting had been the first of its kind to address, at the highest political level, the core issues at the heart of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, which had long been the most neglected of the three Conventions to emerge from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 1992; the meeting had highlighted the importance of strengthening the Convention by providing the necessary financial and technical resources to enable it to carry out its mandate.

73. His Government, working with civil society groups, had established a national programme to combat desertification, a green scheme project and a national climate policy, making his country one of the few Member States to be implementing an integrated

sustainable land management programme. It was working with communal and commercial farmers to combat land degradation. Namibia also hosted the centre for research and training on desertification issues of the Southern African Development Community. His delegation hoped that the Rio+20 Conference would achieve substantive progress towards the establishment of a new global environmental governance regime and reaffirm the balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development.

74. **Mr. Jonasson** (Iceland) said despite being among the world's greatest environmental challenges, land degradation and desertification were not receiving the global attention they deserved. The global community would be unable to achieve its goals of food and water security, meet its greenhouse gas targets and eradicate poverty without a major improvement in the conservation and restoration of the world's soil resources.

75. According to statistics from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the world would need to increase food production by 70 per cent over the next 40 years. Whereas, in the past, increasing food needs had been met mainly by clearing and irrigating more land, those options were rapidly narrowing. Soil was a non-renewable resource. In many areas of the world soil fertility had been depleted through years of unsustainable land use; if soil organic carbon were increased in degraded land, global food production would be boosted dramatically. The international community should also use the income stream generated by carbon trading to provide incentives to restore degraded soil and ecosystems.

76. Iceland had participated actively in international cooperation on soil protection and had been among those countries advocating soil restoration for climate change adaptation and mitigation while simultaneously providing opportunities for productive human use. It had also emphasized the role of carbon sequestration through land restoration as an effective strategy that increased farm productivity and income, made agriculture more resilient to climatic variations and transformed the agricultural sector into part of the solution to climate change rather than allowing it to remain part of the problem.

77. Iceland welcomed the launch of the Global Soil Partnership at FAO in September 2011, which promoted integrated and participatory approaches to achieving soil protection and sustainable land management. Its own long-term efforts to halt soil erosion and restore land quality formed the foundation for the United Nations University-Land Restoration Training Programme, which had provided training for a number of participants from countries combating land degradation and desertification, particularly in Africa. The global goals of restoring land quality were unattainable without action at the local level; participatory approaches had been a key element in Iceland's success in combating desertification.

78. His Government stressed the need to increase efforts in capacity-building for sustainable development and gender equality. Women were major actors in the agricultural sectors of many countries; capacity-building of women was therefore vital for the sustainable development of agriculture in those areas.

79. **Mr. Sembayev** (Kazakhstan) said that 2011 marked the twentieth anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Since a moratorium on nuclear testing had been imposed in 1989, it could be said that the test site had been silent for 22 years. The Semipalatinsk region nevertheless continued to suffer from the consequences of nuclear testing. Residents were prone to elevated cancer rates, child mortality was higher than the national average and a high percentage of children were being born with various pathologies associated with radiation exposure. Environmental damage was severe, leading to the sequestration of millions of hectares of agricultural land.

80. His Government had undertaken the necessary measures to rehabilitate the Semipalatinsk region. Social protection had been strengthened, and, in particular, persons who were living or had lived in areas of radiation risk were provided with early and augmented pensions. In 2006 his Government had resumed paying compensation for damage caused.

81. Beginning in 2005, his Government had undertaken the restoration and development of the city of Semey under a comprehensive socio-economic development plan for 2009-2012 and a development programme for 2011-2015; in addition, it had allocated $57 million in 2011 for the development of the city. His Government expressed appreciation to the United Nations, its agencies and programmes, as well as other

international organizations and donor countries which were continuing to provide assistance.

82. At the current session of the General Assembly, Kazakhstan had put forward two initiatives to be taken up at the Rio+20 Conference, namely the Global Energy and Ecological Strategy and the Astana Green Bridge Initiative. The former aimed to secure universal access to energy and other natural resources by mid-century while the latter would promote partnerships with green businesses in order to develop clean technologies and investment, in implementation of the Strategy. The Initiative provided for joint action by States, international, non-governmental and scientific organizations and business to create or develop new sectors; the basic approach was to provide long-term and systematic assistance to countries and organizations in attracting green investment and sharing best practices.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.